

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PANAMA IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 023634

FOR ASST SECRETARY ROGERS

FOL REPEAT GEORGETOWN 0203 SENT ACTION SECSTATE INFO

BRASILIA CARACAS PARAMARIBO PORT OF SPAIN JAN 30

QTE

C O N F I D E N T I A L GEORGETOWN 0203

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2 (IMPTODET)

TAGS: PFOR, CU, GY, AO

SUBJECT: CUBAN REFUELING OPERATION AT TIMEHRI AND POSSIBILITY OF
FUTURE CUBAN MILITARY PRESENCE

REF: GEORGETOWN 179 AND PREVIOUS

1. TEXACO MANAGER ADVISED EMBOFF 27 JANUARY THAT CUBAN SHIP
10 DE OCTUBRE STILL DOCKED AT TIMEHRI, AND TWO SOVIET-BUILT
TANKER TRUCKS WERE BUSILY TRANSPORTING FUEL FROM SHIP TO STORAGE
FACILITIES (REFTEL). OTHER SOURCES CONFIRMED SHIP WAS STILL DOCKED
NOON 28 JANUARY.

2. IN COURSE OF CONVERSATION, MANAGER NOTED THAT GOG CIVIL
AVIATION DEPT HAS APPROACHED HIM WITH REQUEST FOR COST ESTIMATE
OF SUPPLY AND INSTALLATION FUEL STORAGE FACILITIES OF 50,000
GALLONS EACH AT OGLE AIRPORT (GEORGETOWN AREA), TIMEHRI (FOR GDF),
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KIMBIA (NATIONAL SERVICE CAMP), AND TACAMA (GDF BATTLE SCHOOL).

MANAGER PUZZLED OVER REQUEST, ESPECIALLY ONE FOR OGLE WHICH ALREADY HAS 50,000 GALLON CAPACITY AND IS UNDER-UTILIZED. HE HAS PASSED REQUEST ONE TO PORT OF SPAIN TEXACO OFFICE.

3. ANOTHER BUSINESS SOURCE WHO HAS PROVIDED RELIABLE IN PAST TOLD EMBOFF JANUARY 29 THAT TWENTY FUEL TANKS WERE OFF-LOADED FROM 10 DE OCTUBRE AT GUYBAU'S DOCK AT LINDEN, TRUCKED TO TIMEHRI, AND ARE BEING INSTALLED UNDERGROUND WITHIN THE CONFINES OF THEY GUYANA DEFENSE FORCE COMPOUND. HE ESTIMATES THE TANKS TO BE 10,000 AND 20,000 GALLON CAPACITY (TEN OF EACH SIZE), AND SAID THAT CUBANS ARE USING THREE TANKERS TO HAUL FUEL FROM SHIP TO TANKS. HE ALSO SAID THAT CUBANA AIRCRAFT (#699) DEPARTED TIMEHRI FOR PARAMARIBO (PRESUMABLY LATE JANUARY 28OR EARLY JANUARY 29, BUT WE HAVE NOT RPT NOT CONFIRMED THIS). INFORMATION THAT TWENTY (RATHER THAN FOUR, TENOR TWELVE) FUEL TANKS OFF-LOADED AT LINDEN AND TRUCKED TO TIMEHRI, AND THAT THEY ARE BEING INSTALLED AT LEAST PARTLY UNDERGROUND, WAS GIVEN TO EMBOFF BY A SEPARATE AND UNTESTED SOURCE ON JANUARY 26. THAT SOURCE SAID REASON FOR OFF-LOADING AT LINDEN WAS GREATER CHANCE OF CONCEALING OPERATION THAT IF AT GEORGETOWN (RIDICULOUS) AND PHYSICAL INCAPABILITY OF SMALL TIMEHRI DOCK RECEIVING SUCH LARGE ITEMS. SHIP THEN PROCEEDED TIMEHRI (WHERE EMBOFFS FIRST OBSERVED IT) SATURDAY SO AS TO DISCHARGE FUEL INTO THESE TANKS, AS THEY ARE SET UP.

4. LOCAL JOURNALIST WHO WROTE AFP STORY TOLD PAO HE UNDERSTANDS THAT CUBAN MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR FISHERIES, MARITIME AFFAIRS, AND PORT AUTHORITY WERE ON CU-699 WHICH ARRIVED FROM AFRICA JANUARY 23. THEY DID NOT DEPART WITH CREW ON RELIEF PLANE, ACCORDING SOURCE, BUT LEFT FOR KINGSTON ON ALM FLIGHT 0915 JANUARY 25 AFTER HAVING RECEIVED VISAS FROM LOCAL JAMAICAN HIGH COMMISSION.

5. AS OF JANUARY 28, EIGHT TO TEN CUBANS, APPARENTLY TECHNICIANS INVOLVED WITH REFUELING OR AIRCRAFT REPAIR OPERATION, WERE RESIDING TOWER HOTEL, ACCORDING TO TWO SOURCES, WITH GUARD IN HALL. EMBO F OBSERVED GUARD, WHO IS GUYANESE EMPLOYEE OF LOCAL PRIVATE SECURITY SERVICE.

6. THREE SOURCES HAVE NOW REPORTED FROM SECONDARYINFORMATION THAT JET FUEL OFF-LOADED BY SHIP 10 DE OCTUBRE IS CONTAMINATED, APPARENTLY WITH BUNKER C. IF TRUE, THAT WOULDPROVIDE RATIONALE
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FOR UNCONFIRMED FLIGHT OF CUBANA 699 TO PARAMARIBO, PRESUMABLY FOR REFUELING, AND FOR FACT THAT THERE HAVE SO FAR BEEN NO FURTHER KNOWN CUBAN ANGOLA AIRLIFT FLIGHTS THIS WEEK.

7. COMMENT: GOG PLAN TO EXPAND FUELING CAPABILITY OF GDF (PARA #3) SUPPORTS OTHER INDICATIONS WE HAVE RECEIVED OF PLANNED INCREASE IN MILITARY AIRCRAFT, AS WELL AS OF GDF HINTERLAND ACTIVITIES. PRESENT AIRWING TOO SMALL TO WARRANT SUCH AN INCREASE IN FUEL

STORAGE CAPACITY. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT CUBANS HAVE OFFERED TO
INSTALL FACILITIES FOR GOG IN ABOVE LOCATIONS AND GOG IS JUST
SHOPPING FOR COST COMPARISON, WITH NO INTENTION OF CONTRACTING
WITH TEXACO. IF CUBANS LEAP FROM PRESENT RAPIDLY GROWING INVOLVEMENT
WITH GDF IN COASTAL GUYANA TO SIMILAR INVOLVEMENT WITH GDF IN
INTERIOR, BURNHAM SURELY REALIZES HE IS PLAYING WITH FIRE
OF PROVOKING BRAZILIAN AND VENEZUELAN REACTION. HOWEVER, GIVEN
HIS KNOWN PARANOIA OVER BRAZIL, AND TO LESSER EXTENT VENEZUELA,
WE COULD NOT PRESENTLY RULE OUT HIS HAVING ALREADY SET STAGE
FOR SUBSTANTIAL CUBAN MILITARY INVOLVEMENT IN GUYANA.

KREBS

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